



The Shifting Media Landscape:

Navigating Earned Media Outreach
in a Post-Pandemic World

Prepared by Access Intelligence



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KEY LEARNINGS

- **Make pitches minimally disruptive, readily accessible and as plug-and-play as possible:** clear, concise language, 1-to-1 email-based outreach, inclusion of all relevant assets, and ready tie-in to larger trends.
- **Approach reporters at the right time.** Stay ahead of major news items/current media trends to predict news drivers that will be trending a week to a month in the future.
- **Journalists now consider content and metrics in new ways.** Pitches can stand out by including varied visuals and tying to larger trends to optimize audience interest.
- **Journalists are heavily overburdened and under-resourced.** Show respect by delivering brief (under 200 words) pitches, stay story-focused, clarify why the news matters to readers and limit follow-ups.
- **Press releases are the top type of content journalists want to receive.** Releases should include quotes with readily applicable story angles and contain genuine insight into the news. Avoid platitudes and industry specific jargon. Executive quotes that explain how the company's offerings "actually benefit others" are more likely to be utilized. Customize press releases to targets whenever possible.
- **Reporting work is increasingly being done by email, making it harder to keep pitches notable and difficult to respect journalists' boundaries.** A surplus of emails has many journalists overwhelmed. Timing pitches to 5AM-12PM Eastern on Mondays before inboxes fill up is ideal and follow-ups should be limited.
- **Be respectful of burnout and psychological distress - seek to support, not overwhelm.** Respect time and energy by packaging pitches efficiently, including all needed assets and limiting follow ups. Promptly and comprehensively respond to requests for more information, and tailor to individual reporter preferences whenever possible.
- **"Fake news" is one of the top concerns for journalists.** Content is increasingly scrutinized for accuracy. Data sources used should be those considered the most trustworthy by journalists - academic subject experts and C-suite executives.

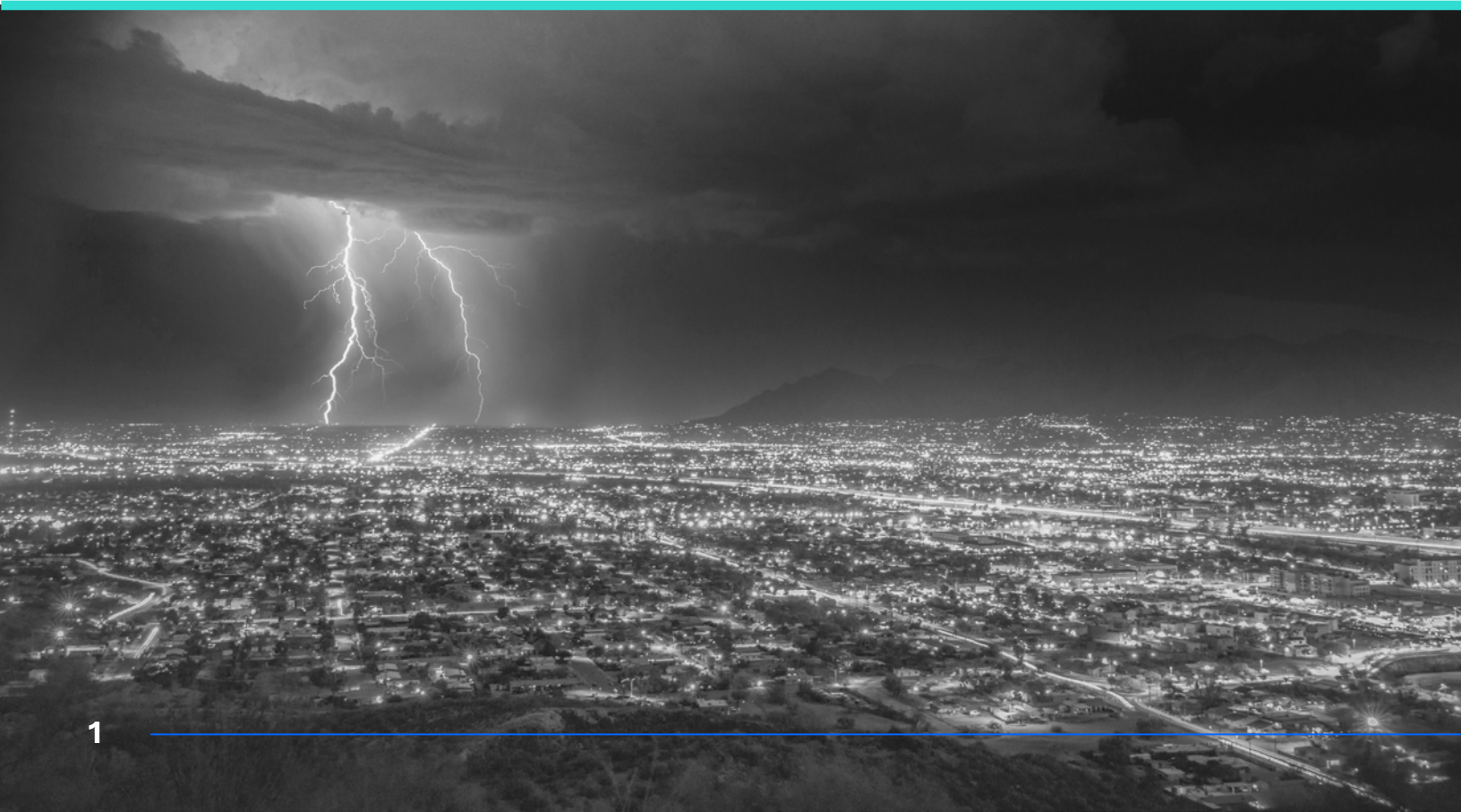
A PERFECT STORM

Over the past decade, the development and adoption of new technologies among both the press and their readerships, has shifted how media operates. From the heyday of print media and nationally syndicated morning shows, there has been a marked disruption of the news market as social media and online news have equalized the media machine, diminishing the difference in influence between the traditional journalism of the New York Times and fledgling blogs run by people without formal journalism backgrounds. As media has adapted to the increasingly fragmented landscape of online news, it has been left without reliable revenue streams, and the newsroom job market is increasingly drying up.

While the COVID-19 pandemic in and of itself has not altered these macro-level patterns, a shift to remote work and financial reckonings as the ad-based media economy shut down accelerated both digital transformation within the news

industry and the shrinking and consolidation of major newsrooms. For journalists on the front line of digesting information about the pandemic, the impacts have been twofold. In addition to personally reckoning with the crisis, they've watched their coworkers and collaborators lose their jobs and have been forced to absorb their responsibilities. In fact, **one-in-five journalists have consistently described a lack of access to resources as the most difficult challenges for media year over year.**¹ These limitations have implications for how PR professionals can effectively target and secure media coverage.

The following report examines seven key ways in which the pandemic has both accelerated and complicated the longer term trends in media industry over the past decade and provides insights to help PR practitioners adjust their earned media strategies accordingly.



1. THE SHRINKING NEWSROOM

THE BIG PICTURE

Employment at many publications, has dropped dramatically over the past decade. Shifting news consumption habits and an explosion of media choices have diminished the size of individual outlets. Increasing ownership of outlets by publicly-traded corporations has also added significant profit and growth expectations that have led to repeated cycles of layoffs, downsizing and mergers in the industry. According to the University of North Carolina's Hussman School of Journalism and Media, **from 2008 to 2020, the number of newspaper reporters and editors employed fell from 71,000 to 31,000.**ⁱⁱ A corresponding trend can be observed across a wide range of media formats and disciplines – **from 2008 to 2019, the number of general newsroom employees dropped from 114,000 to 88,000.**ⁱⁱⁱ However, newsroom shrinkages disproportionately affect local newspapers, tied to plummeting revenues^{iv} and contribute to a dearth in local news sources that is increasingly viewed as a crisis.

PANDEMIC IMPACT

The economic costs of the COVID-19 pandemic drastically hastened job loss in newsrooms. **In 2020, journalism saw record layoffs and job cuts, with more than 16,160 jobs lost – a 200% increase** from the 5,389 jobs cut in 2019.^v Research suggests that a third of large newspapers experienced layoffs in 2020 as a result of the pandemic.^{vi} However, as the pandemic eases, layoffs have slowed down significantly. As of June 15, approximately 963 newsroom jobs had been lost thus far during 2021, compared to 10,576 over the same period of time in 2020.^{vii} Additionally, many new media jobs are being added, suggesting **the industry is gradually recovering from the deep losses wrought by 2020.**

IMPLICATIONS FOR PR

Shrinking newsrooms and dwindling resources due to layoffs, a consistent trend since the mid 2000s, are leading to **a stronger preference for 1-on-1 email pitching from journalists.**^{viii} Email based outreach is vastly more convenient for reporters

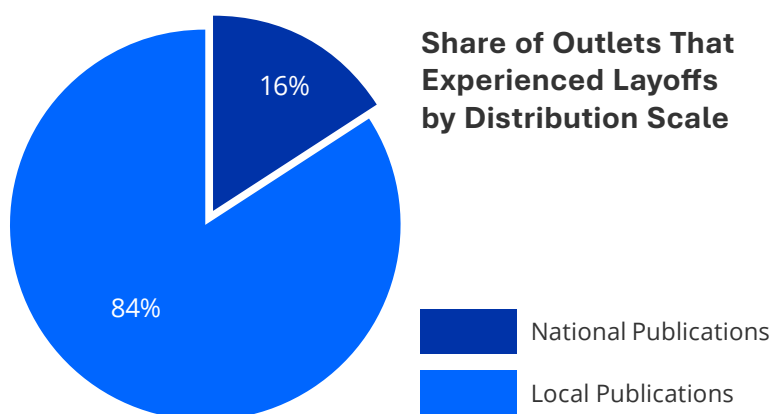
FROM 2008 TO 2019, THE NUMBER OF GENERAL NEWSROOM EMPLOYEES DROPPED FROM 114,000 TO 88,000

and less disruptive to increasingly busy schedules. Presenting **clear and concise pitches with relevant assets included so the material is as accessible and plug-and-play as needed is also key.** Furthermore, as the breadth of journalists' responsibilities has grown to cover disparate newsroom needs, the importance of **tying a story into general news trends** has likewise grown, **as the same journalists are reporting on a broader range of topics.** At this point, **42% of journalists plan their stories a week to a month ahead of time.**^{ix} It's important to stay ahead of major news items and current media trends to predict which news drivers will be trending a week to one month in the future in order to **approach reporters at the right time.**

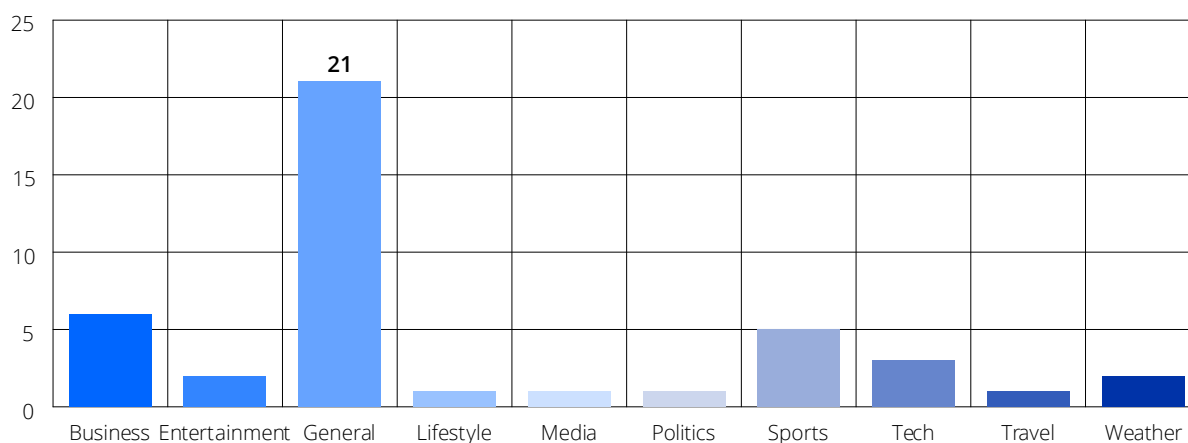


MEDIA LAYOFFS IN FOCUS

These graphs have been compiled from data collected by Poynter that tracks outlets that experienced layoffs, buyouts, furloughs, closures, and more during the pandemic. In these charts, the term “layoffs” refers both layoffs and outlet buyouts. General closures and furloughs are not included. The data below is current through July 19, 2021

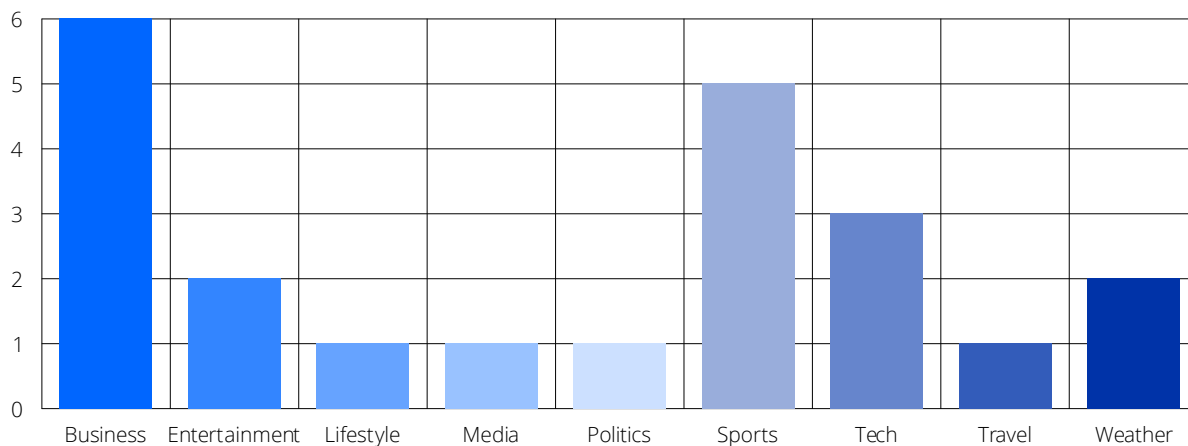


Coronavirus Pandemic National Media Layoffs by Publication Type



Source: [Poynter](#)

Coronavirus Pandemic National Media Layoffs by Publication Type (General Excluded)



Source: [Poynter](#)

2. A REVOLUTION IN NEWS CONSUMPTION HABITS

THE BIG PICTURE

The ways in which news is disseminated and consumed has seen dramatic change over the past decade. Journalists are **increasingly moving away from traditional newsrooms to alternative formats like email newsletters**, citing a growing desire for independence from publishers,^x the potential to make more money, and an increasingly competitive job market in journalism amid historic job cuts.^{xi} The email newsletter format in particular has exploded in popularity through offerings such as Substack, prompting social media companies to create their own competitors. Though the resurgence of email newsletters has been documented for several years, **the desire for independent journalism, catered news separate from the chaos of social media and the general**

JOURNALISTS HAVE CONSISTENTLY IDENTIFIED THE PRESENCE OF IMAGES OR INFOGRAPHICS – AS WELL AS THEMATIC RESONANCE WITH LARGER NEWS STORIES AND RELEVANCE TO THE REPORTER’S SPECIFIC TARGET AUDIENCE – AS KEY STORY ELEMENTS DRIVING SHAREABILITY

media and the convenience of mobile devices has sparked a new revitalization. Meanwhile, consumers are generally growing more and more likely to get their news from digital media^{xiii} regardless of the specific format.

Additionally, the availability of detailed audience metrics has changed how roughly three-in-five journalists evaluate the success of their stories,^{xiii} **with website traffic and social media “shareability” emerging as key article performance metrics**, especially as mobile media consumption has risen and social media

has emerged as a competitor for traditional news media over the past decade. Per studies from Muck Rack, **journalists have consistently identified the presence of images or infographics – as well as thematic resonance with larger news stories and relevance to the reporter’s specific target audience – as key story elements driving shareability.**

PANDEMIC IMPACT

News media’s shift to digital has accelerated during the pandemic. Many outlets were forced to make **alterations to print production during the pandemic due to economic and logistical constraints.** This often entailed curtailing or entirely cutting production. In July 2020, the Columbia Journalism School’s Tow Center found that **over one hundred publications had been forced to scale down print operations in some capacity since the beginning of the pandemic.**^{xiv} Additionally, layoffs and closures incentivized some journalists to move to digital formats, including Substack’s newsletters. Even as the shift to the digital accelerates, Cision’s annual State of the Media report has found a **marked deprioritization of photojournalism – forcing media to become more reliant on stock images even as the importance of incorporating visuals into their stories grows.**

IMPLICATIONS FOR PR

The increased emphasis on audience metrics and social media “shareability” as key performance metrics journalists consider when planning content has ready applicability to media outreach. PR professionals can make their pitches stand out to journalists by **providing varied visuals to accompany potential stories and optimizing pitches and content to tie into larger trends** likely to maximize audience interest. Carefully **tracking the trajectory of journalists from traditional outlets to other digital media types, such as newsletters, and understanding how their news cycle cadences and manner of operating differ** will also become increasingly necessary as this trend continues to grow.

3. NEWS DESERTS AND THE DECLINE OF LOCAL MEDIA

THE BIG PICTURE

Local news outlets have been forced to cut costs, reduce the size of newsrooms, or shut down entirely because of plunging print advertising revenue and readership. **Over the past fifteen years, more than 2,000 U.S. newspapers have closed – more than a quarter of the total newspapers in the country.**^{xv} The brunt of this loss has taken place in local newspapers. **1,800 communities lost their sole local news outlets between 2004 and 2019, creating “news deserts” in which residents face a critical lack of access to information** about issues affecting them at the local level, with potential consequences for health, education and local events and politics. As a result, civic engagement in a particular town, city, or region can decline. Communities that have been traditionally underserved by media have also been the hardest hit by the crisis.

Furthermore, local newspapers are being increasingly consolidated under entities such as private investments firms, as was the case with Alden Global Capital's takeover of Tribune Publishing.^{xvi} These firms often cut costs to recoup their investments and these cuts typically take the form of staff layoffs. However, companies like Facebook^{xvii} and Twitter^{xviii} are attempting to help aid local journalism by hosting website content. There are also ongoing legislative efforts to support the industry in Congress, including the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act, the Local Journalism Sustainability Act and the Future of Local News Act.

1,800 COMMUNITIES LOST THEIR SOLE LOCAL NEWS OUTLETS BETWEEN 2004 AND 2019, CREATING “NEWS DESERTS” IN WHICH RESIDENTS FACE A CRITICAL LACK OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT ISSUES AFFECTING THEM AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

PANDEMIC IMPACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the already dire local news crisis. **Over 70 local newsrooms closed during 2020,^{xix} while others experienced mass layoffs, furloughs, and pay cuts.** The pandemic has also made the aforementioned consequences of the dearth of local news more apparent – for instance, a lack of a local news outlet in a particular community could make it more difficult to track and predict viral outbreaks. Additionally, local government officials may have more difficulty updating residents on pandemic restrictions and vaccinations without a local news outlet. While social media can help make up for this, only 18% of Americans get their news from social media, and those that do may be less informed than their peers as a result of the spread of disinformation.^{xx}

IMPLICATIONS FOR PR

Given the comparatively worse state of local newsrooms versus national newsrooms, it is important to **show respect for the heavy workload on the journalists who remain by delivering brief (under 200 words), story-focused pitches focused on why the news matters to their readers^{xxi} and by limiting follow-ups.**^{xxii}



4. CORPORATE INFLUENCE AND TECH INDUSTRY BACKLASH

THE BIG PICTURE

As Big Tech expands its influence over nearly every aspect of the way information is distributed and accessed, the **tension between the media and large technology companies is increasing exponentially**. Though many large tech brands have taken steps to offset their impact on journalism,^{xxiii} news outlets are losing billions in revenue^{xxiv} as readers increasingly find their news on social media platforms and aggregators. There are also **concerns relating to objectivity in media reporting on the big tech brands**, when they hold significant power over the distribution of digital content. Similar concerns are also present tied to the corporate ownership of media, with the potential for editorial oversight tailored to benefit financial interests.

In response, **legislators around the world are seeking to protect the media from what is perceived as encroachment of technology companies on the ability of outlets to control and monetize content**. Australia passed a law in February which required Facebook and Google to pay publishers for linking news coverage in search results and news feeds.^{xxv} Meanwhile, lawmakers in the U.S. have proposed the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act,^{xxvi} which would exempt publishers from antitrust laws so that they can collectively negotiate on ad revenue with tech companies. Publishers are also taking action independently of legislatures – Canadian media outlets recently made deals with Facebook and Google to pay those publishers to allow their news stories on the respective platforms, similar to a law passed in Australia earlier this year.

PANDEMIC IMPACT

These changes have significant implications for the pandemic, as some readers may not have access to critical information on pandemic developments if either news outlets or technology companies are uncooperative.

CHANGING MEDIA CASE STUDY: SUBSTACK AND ANDREESSEN HOROWITZ

Ongoing tensions between news media publications, journalists, and corporations - in particular technology companies - have led to **new and different approaches to news distribution**. These include Substack, a newsletter offering that allows journalists to write directly to readers through email, and Future, a publication created by Andreessen Horowitz as part of the venture capital firm's efforts to expand pro-technology news coverage. Journalists join Substack in part to gain independence from traditional publications, as they can directly reach readers through the newsletter format, without the editorial oversight they feel is restrictive. Meanwhile, media efforts like Future, which features editorials from corporate-backed authors on the merits of technology, represent a landscape wherein coverage is unabashedly skewed towards and intertwined with corporate interests.

SUBSTACK

Substack has continued to grow steadily since its launch in 2017. In recent months, the platform has seen journalists flock to it from all sorts of publications. Some journalists cite their reason for the move as being **frustrated with constraints placed upon them by publishers, editors, advertisers, and the notion that they should be maximizing profits rather than writing about what they want to**.^{xlii} Others migrate to Substack for financial reasons – while the platform takes a percentage of the earnings from monetized newsletters, writers may still **make more money than they could at a traditional publisher**. This was especially important during the early days of the pandemic, when many publications saw job cuts. Furthermore, writers can leave the platform at any time, and take their subscribers

RATHER THAN PLATITUDES OR INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC JARGON, JOURNALISTS WANT QUOTES IN PRESS RELEASES TO HAVE READILY APPLICABLE STORY ANGLES AND CONTAIN GENUINE INSIGHT INTO THE NEWS ITEM

IMPLICATIONS FOR PR

Despite these big changes around how the subjects of journalists' reporting are impacting their ability to do their jobs, the media must continue to cover any newsworthy developments on major tech brands. However, the conflicts of interest present have created an environment of friction, with implications both for objectivity and the receptiveness of both parties. At a broader level, **media still consider press releases and news announcements from companies to be worth covering, but they aren't interested in writing puff pieces** focused on a news item. Instead, they are **looking to contextualize for their readers why it matters for them**. Together, these challenges create a tough situation for brands seeking receptivity.

In Cision's 2019 study, **71% of journalists rated press releases and news announcements as the top type of content they want to receive from brands.**^{xxvii} Rather than platitudes or industry-specific jargon, journalists want **quotes in press releases to have readily applicable story angles and contain genuine insight into the news item**. To merit inclusion in a news article, media would like to see any executive quotes included **focused on explaining how the company's services "actually benefit others" with transparent, concise language, and any key messaging grounded in the narrative tying the brand news to a larger trend** consumers are interested in reading about. However, only 3% of journalists report relying heavily on press releases from newswires^{xxviii} and **65% of journalists would prefer to receive a customized press release** rather than the one-size-fits-all release for the general audience.^{xxix}

with them. Substack also **offers writers legal services so that they can potentially pursue challenging and controversial stories** that they may not have the freedom to cover under a traditional publisher.

All of this allows journalists a **significant degree of freedom and independence** away from traditional publishers. This separation is what attracts both journalists and readers to the platform. As such, Substack is continuing to grow, with its **readership increasing from 25,000 in its first year to 500,000 this year**. Its growth and the quality of its content, free of interference from editors, has sparked **worries for more traditional formats due to the loss of high-quality columnists and potentially significant ad revenue**, especially as the platform continues to grow.

ANDREESSEN HOROWITZ AND BIG TECH

In contrast, some venture capital firms and technology companies are attempting to **take the reins of narratives through control of their own media outlets**. Though technology companies have long utilized media operations and produced editorial content, Andreessen Horowitz has aggressively expanded its efforts. The firm has largely ceased cooperating with traditional media and is investing in pro-technology publishing. The first of these efforts is Future, a website that calls itself "the future of media." It features **editorial content that portrays tech companies in a positive light, often written by those with a financial stake in said concepts.**^{xlili}

The strategy has created concerns for the neutrality of technology coverage and its effect on the media landscape. According to the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford, American trust in media has declined over the past year.^{xliv} Meanwhile, Gallup reports that confidence in technology institutions have declined over the past year as well.^{xlv} There are concerns that this approach of interweaving media and corporations **may lead to a further decline in trust in media and technology**,

as some readers may be tricked into thinking coverage presented in this manner is coming from an unbiased perspective. Other readers, meanwhile, **may recognize the inherent bias and be less trustful of the coverage.** There are also concerns that companies and individuals writing for Future may give themselves **insider access and exclusive interviews, limiting the ability of other outlets to effectively break news.** Future currently has a unique visitor per month count of 75,618 according to SimilarWeb data, though the platform just launched in June and will very likely continue to expand.

In addition to Andreessen Horowitz, other companies in the technology space have also sought to gain some measure of control over the media. Facebook and Twitter, for instance, are taking inspiration from Substack and launching their own newsletter services.^{xlvii}

Somewhat ironically, Andreessen Horowitz was the lead investor in Substack's Series A and B funding rounds. As such, **while the approaches are different, they are not wholly incompatible** or antithetical, nor has there been any overt conflict between them. That said, Substack and Andreessen Horowitz's media strategies **represent drastically different views of how journalists and media should function in the future.** Each approach has starkly different implications for media and its interaction with readers – as well as for PR professionals. Substack emphasizes an independent approach to journalism, which is catered to readers in an individualized manner through writers curating their own reader lists, and readers subscribing to individual writers. Meanwhile, Future's pro-technology stance seeks to further the intersection of corporate interests and journalism, which may change readers' perspectives and perceptions of these brands, especially if they're unaware of the inherent bias.



5. NEWSROOM CULTURE IN THE ERA OF REMOTE WORK

PANDEMIC IMPACT

Remote work has drastically changed the dynamics of many newsrooms, with journalists and other media professionals forced to **alter how they collaborate and communicate with coworkers**. Some publications have also cut their real estate to save costs during the worst of the pandemic.^{xxx} Though many outlets have begun to return to work as vaccination rates increase, there are growing tensions between publishers and workers. Unions representing workers at The New York Times, Hearst Magazines, and Bloomberg Industry Group have **resisted demands to return to the office, citing safety concerns and the growing desire for flexibility with remote work**. Outlets are also taking drastically different approaches to how this is handled over the course of the coming months. Some publishers are racing to get back into offices, while others are adopting a hybrid approach.^{xxxi}

IMPLICATIONS FOR PR

As more and more day-to-day reporting work is pushed to email, it is **growing harder to keep pitches noticeable without stepping over**

journalists' boundaries. This increase in emails has also made timing of pitching more important as journalists are increasingly overloaded. According to findings from Cision, **pitches would ideally be emailed between 5AM-12PM Eastern on Mondays** so media have time to review before their inboxes fill up.^{xxxii}

AS MORE AND MORE DAY-TO-DAY REPORTING WORK IS PUSHED TO EMAIL, IT IS GROWING HARDER TO KEEP PITCHES NOTICEABLE WITHOUT STEPPING OVER JOURNALISTS' BOUNDARIES

6. MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS AND BURNOUT IN JOURNALISM

PANDEMIC IMPACT

As with workers in many industries, journalists and other media professionals have seen the pandemic take a toll on their health. According to the Journalism and the Pandemic Survey, **70% of polled journalists reported psychological issues as their most difficult obstacle to overcome during the pandemic**. Furthermore, 80% of respondents noted negative psychological effects stemming from the pandemic, such as anxiety, burnout, and depression.^{xxxiii} Some publications have made initial efforts to respond to this distress – for instance, the New York Times has instituted “global days off” to counterbalance pandemic burnout.^{xxxiv}

IMPLICATIONS FOR PR

PR professionals can maintain strong relationships with journalists by being respectful of their burnout when pitching. Whether by **including a visual element or tightening up a pitch and limiting follow-ups, by promptly and comprehensively responding to requests for more information or by learning the pitching preferences of each of your media contacts and tailoring your communications to match**, there are a variety of ways to help journalists feel supported by your pitches rather than overwhelmed by them.

7. PUBLIC POLARIZATION AND A CRISIS OF TRUST IN MEDIA

THE BIG PICTURE

Americans have become increasingly less trustful of media since the 1970s. This is in part due to the politicization and polarization of media, which makes maintaining credibility especially difficult. However, trust has further decreased during the pandemic, in part due to a surge in misinformation. A report from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford found that **29% of Americans surveyed trust news media “most of the time” – ranking the United States last among the 46 countries** involved in the study.^{xxxv} The decline in trust has become especially pronounced along partisan lines in recent years, and comes along with a decline in trust with regard to government. According to Gallup, there is a significant gap between Democrats and Republicans with regard to trust in media, with 73% of Democrats having a “great deal/fair amount” of trust compared to 10% of Republicans.^{xxxvi}

PANDEMIC IMPACT

Disinformation associated with COVID-19 has been a major challenge for media since the pandemic began, so much so that the World Health Organization dubbed it a “Disinfodemic.” Over 80% of journalists polled by the Journalism and the Pandemic Survey reported coming across misinformation weekly.^{xxxvii} Moreover, the further **decline of local journalism has caused disinformation to spread at an increased rate.** Additionally, the Tow Center for Digital Journalism has reported on a network of “pink slime” news outlets, which purport to be locally based but are actually distributing algorithmically driven news stories that may promote partisan talking points or misinformation. Without a credible local news outlet in a given geography, these types of outlets fill the void.^{xxxviii} Furthermore, the lack of local news outlets may lead to a decline in participation in local politics. In turn, local political matters are increasingly determined by national affairs. A study conducted in 2020 found that increased nationalized news consumption in local areas associated with a lack of local news coverage led



CHANGING MEDIA CASE STUDY: FAKE NEWS AND SHIFTING STANDARDS OF AUTHORITY

With the most divisive presidential election to date in modern U.S. history and the normalization of the concept of “fake news,” **2016 was a watershed moment for consumer trust in media.** In an annual Cision survey of media from Q1 of 2017, 91% of journalists believed the public had lost trust in media over the past year.^{xlvi} While the number of journalists who believe the public has lost trust in the media has decreased each year since then, the rate at which journalists perceive loss in trust in the media has not yet fallen below 50% in any given year. As Gallup reports, in 2019 58% of American adults surveyed did not trust media “at all” or “very much”.^{xlvi} While the coronavirus pandemic has helped restore some public trust in media, **51% of journalists say that ensuring content is 100% accurate is more important than revenue, exclusivity, or being the first to publish** as discussions around “fake news” remain one of the top three concerns for journalists.^{xlvi}

to decreased split-ticket voting, speaking to an increase in polarization.^{xxxix}

The decline in trust for media and spread of misinformation has implications for the worldwide recovery from the pandemic, as it may lead to distrust in the coronavirus vaccine and less willingness to follow pandemic protocols. For instance, The New York Times reports that misinformation spread on the vaccine, which spiked in July as the delta variant's spread escalated, increases hesitancy to take it.^{xi}

IMPLICATIONS FOR PR

After four years of steady erosion of public trust in media, **“fake news” is one of the top three concerns for journalists, and over half believe that ensuring content is completely accurate is the most important consideration when putting an article together.**^{xii} To reflect this priority, we should prioritize data sources considered the most trustworthy by media, including **academic subject experts and C-suite executives.**

AFTER FOUR YEARS OF STEADY EROSION OF PUBLIC TRUST IN MEDIA, “FAKE NEWS” IS ONE OF THE TOP THREE CONCERNS FOR JOURNALISTS, AND OVER HALF BELIEVE THAT ENSURING CONTENT IS COMPLETELY ACCURATE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION WHEN PUTTING AN ARTICLE TOGETHER

As journalists struggle to combat dwindling faith in their profession – even amongst their own ranks – there has been a **shift towards referencing sources they find to be credible.** While there is not hard data on how media perceived credible and authoritative sources prior to the rise of the concept of “fake news” in the 2016 presidential campaign, the fact that these questions were not included in Cision’s annual survey prior to the election demonstrates a notable shift in how credibility is perceived within the media.

According to media surveyed in Muckrack’s 2021 State of Journalism report,ⁱ **academic subject experts and C-suite executives are considered the most authoritative and credible, with over three-quarters of reporters trusting them as sources.** As such, it is recommended that pitches and statements leverage them over sources journalists find less credible – including lower-level company spokespeople, agency spokespeople, and celebrities or influencers – as much as possible.

Additionally, the way journalists get information matters. **28% of journalists, a plurality of respondents, rated face-to-face in-person or telephone interviews as the most trustworthy.** Journalists encourage brands to “provide the most informed sources rather than spokespeople or designated talkers” and “actually set up interviews rather than just provide canned statements.”ⁱⁱⁱ **Major wires, known experts, academics and brand experts, in that order, were all also rated higher than other news sources for trustworthiness.**



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